

PART VI

LIVESTOCK, DAIRYING AND POULTRY

General Importance

In both value and numbers, Yakima ranks as the top livestock county in Washington. All livestock farms, including poultry, sold animals and products worth \$32,919,536 in 1959, the highest among the 39 counties. This figure was 15 percent of the 1959 state total. Yakima also leads all counties by a large margin in numbers of cattle and calves, sheep and lambs, horses and turkeys raised for fryers. In hogs, Yakima was second.

Livestock farming, dairying and poultry farming are, however, secondary activities compared to the production of commercial crops in Yakima County. At present, less than one-third of the total cash income received by farmers and ranchers is accounted for by livestock sales, leaving over two-thirds derived from the sale of crops. Many of the crops grown, however, are raw materials which go into the production and finishing of livestock.

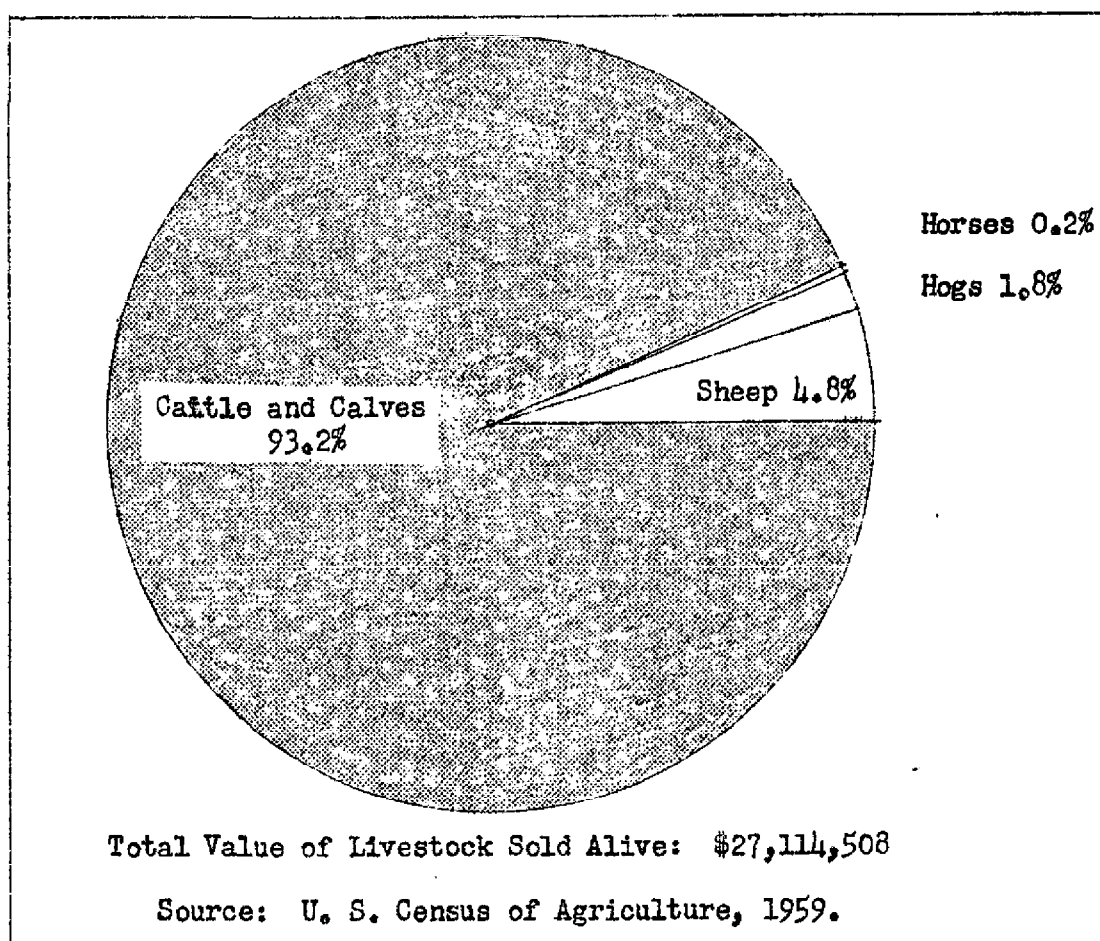


Figure 13. Value of Livestock Sold Alive
Yakima County, 1959

Livestock Trends

Significant changes have occurred in livestock farming during the last two decades. The value of livestock and animal products sold has increased over sevenfold, from \$4,208,238 in 1940 to \$32,919,536 in 1959. There has been a large increase in beef cattle, while dairy cattle, hogs, sheep and horse numbers have declined. Cattle and calves on farms in Yakima County rose from 63,900 head in 1940 to a new high of 149,800 head in 1962. The trend in chicken and turkey numbers has been gradually upward. Years of experience and research have helped shape the growth and importance of Yakima's cattle, dairy and poultry industry. In recent times, farmers have improved breeds and feeding practices. The increase in alfalfa has made available the legume hay so essential to quality beef and high-volume milk production. Hog producers have shifted toward leaner animals and through better management practices have increased litter sizes. Sheepmen have moved toward the production of heavier wool fleeces of desired grades. Emphasis in lamb marketing has been to improve quality and to spread marketing throughout the year. Poultrymen have turned to larger flocks, while greatly increasing the number of broilers and the rate of egg production per layer.

Cattle: Beef and Dairy Farming

Cattle have been a profitable part of the county's economy and are the most important livestock. Yakima's cattle business is now a \$25,000,000 a year industry, accounting for 98 percent of the value of all livestock sold alive and 23 percent of all farm products sold in 1959. Some 2,800 farmers make up this industry which has given rise to a multitude of related industries, such as meat-packing plants, feed processing, trucking lines and feedlots.

In 1962, Yakima was the leading cattle county of the state with 149,800 head of cattle and calves--the largest number ever recorded in Yakima. Number of cattle on farms reached a low in 1930 of 38,352 head. Thereafter, the cattle population began to increase steadily, reaching 87,900 head in 1950 and continuing its expansion to the all-time peak reported in 1962.

Beef cattle operations in Yakima County fall into three general categories: feedlot enterprises, cattle ranching and farm beef. Most of the production is in fed cattle from feed yards. Cattle feeding throughout the county is extensive and steadily growing in importance. At present, Yakima is the leading county in number of feedlots (125), containing over one-fifth of the state's total. There are a few range operations where cattle roam large areas of the Rattlesnake and Horse Heaven Hills. Some of these ranches are extensive, covering over 10,000 acres with more than 1,000 head of beef. Farm beef production is common and generally found as a sideline where farmers can make use of crop by-products.

The most popular of the beef breeds among cattlemen is the reddish, white-faced Hereford. Ranking second is the all-black Aberdeen Angus followed by the Polled Hereford and Shorthorn.

Dairying as a part of the cattle industry is secondary and supplies the farmers of the county with only about 3 percent of their annual income. The production and sale of milk and cream is the main enterprise. Yakima ranked ninth among the counties of Washington in 1959 in the value of dairy products sold. In addition, considerable income is derived as a by-product of dairying from the sale of dairy animals for beef, such as old cows and veal calves.

Table 37. Livestock Numbers on Farms
Yakima County, 1939-1962

Year	All Cattle (head)	Beef Cattle (head)	Dairy Cattle (head)
1939	58,000	24,000	34,000
1940	63,900	29,300	34,600
1941	69,000	28,600	40,400
1942	70,700	28,500	42,200
1943	77,300	36,000	41,300
1944	86,000	44,100	41,900
1945	86,000	44,700	41,300
1946	88,400	51,200	37,200
1947	89,400	59,200	30,200
1948	86,200	56,800	29,400
1949	87,600	60,500	27,100
1950	87,900	60,400	27,500
1951	103,100	77,000	26,100
1952	116,700	94,700	22,000
1953	121,500	98,000	23,500
1954	123,400	98,600	24,800
1955	127,200	102,100	25,100
1956	139,500	116,900	22,600
1957	122,000	101,000	21,000
1958	117,900	98,200	19,700
1959	124,900	105,000	19,900
1960	131,500	112,000	19,500
1961	139,000	119,300	19,700
1962	149,800	130,300	19,500

Source: Statistical Reporting Service, U.S.D.A.

As a farm activity, dairying has been decreasing in importance. The value of dairy products sold off farms decreased 11 percent between 1949 and 1959. Whole milk production trended downward from a high of 86,979,549 pounds in 1954 to a low of 69,216,289 in 1959, a decrease of 20 percent. The number of dairy cattle on farms has continued to decline. In 1962, numbers of dairy cattle were down 28 percent from the 27,100 on farms in 1949. Associated with this decrease has been the declining trend in the number of dairy farms. Farms selling dairy products declined from 2,069 in 1949 to 817 in 1959. Dairy specialty farms numbered 600 in 1950 but only 256 in 1959. Increasing costs in recent years have resulted in a trend toward fewer but larger more efficient operations. Although dairy cattle have declined in numbers, the production of milk per cow has increased, indicating progress in the efficiency of milk-cow herds.

The best breeds of dairy cattle are kept. Most popular are the black and white Holstein-Friesian, the fawn-colored Guernsey and Jersey breeds, Ayrshire and Brown Swiss. Leading dairymen usually keep purebred animals from production-tested herds.

Table 38. Dairy Products Sold From Farms
Yakima County, 1949-1959

Year	Any Milk or Cream Sold	Whole Milk Sold	Cream Sold
	(dollars)	(pounds)	(pounds)
1949	\$3,390,827	77,424,799	458,074
1954	3,281,913	86,979,549	272,936
1959	3,026,388	69,216,289	299,015

Source: U. S. Census of Agriculture

Hogs

Hog raising in Yakima County is mainly a sideline enterprise. Only a small number of farms specialize in hog raising but many farmers (910) have a few. The animal is well adapted to the farms of the irrigated sections. Hogs and pigs can eat alfalfa, grain, cull potatoes and other by-products of crops grown in these areas. Farmers have discovered that these animals quickly convert cheap feed into meat, plus the fact that they add to the diversification of the farm. There are a few feeder herds of 50 head or more.

Although maintaining second place among the counties of Washington in raising hogs, Yakima farmers have reduced their interest in this industry since 1920. In 1920, there were about 28,651 hogs on Yakima County farms. By 1954, the number had decreased to 14,077 head, but in 1959 the number was back up to 17,197 head. Increased local supplies of corn, grain and chopped alfalfa have favored the recent expansion in commercial hog raising.

The production of meat-type hogs is undergoing many changes, which include new breeds, better feeds, more labor-saving devices and tailoring market hogs to meet market requirements. A declining demand for lard has led to the development of long, lean animals with a minimum of fat.

Table 39. Hogs, Sheep, Horses and Mules
Yakima County, 1939-1959

Year	Hogs (head)	Sheep (head)	Horses and Mules (head)
1939	22,987	76,496	15,400
1944	13,891	106,128	12,961
1949	16,540	89,838	8,523
1954	14,077	62,768	4,680
1959	17,197	73,834	3,691

Source: U. S. Census of Agriculture

Sheep

The sheep population of Yakima County has declined over 70 percent since 1930. A sharp downward trend for a number of years has lowered the population to

73,834 head. The reduction is attributed to the fact that less range is now available for grazing, operating costs are higher and there is a lack of good herdsmen. Substitute products, such as synthetic fibers, have been replacing wool. Per capita lamb consumption has been declining steadily. As a result, the sheep industry is now a small but still significant part of Yakima's agricultural economy, accounting in most years for 1 to 2 percent of the total cash receipts.

Yakima County, with its mountain slopes, irrigated pastures and large supplies of feed, accounts for more than one-fifth of the state's sheep population and is the major sheep and lamb producing county of Washington. Sheep are concentrated in the Upper Valley surrounding Naches and Tieton and on the Indian Reservation districts of Harrah, Wapato and Toppenish. In 1950, 252 farms had an average farm flock of 356 head; while in 1959, 353 farms raised sheep, averaging 209 head per flock. This indicates a trend away from large range flocks toward small-farm flocks pastured on valley irrigated lands.

Three types of sheep operations are common: range sheep operations, farm flocks and feedlot enterprises. Range sheep operations are migratory, moving as the seasons change. Range sheep are run in bands of about 600 ewes, with a few herds of 1,000 head. Farm flocks are primarily a farm sideline and are pastured or fed on hay within fenced areas. These flocks vary in size from a few to several hundred head. A third kind of sheep operation in Yakima County is the fattening of lambs for market. Lambs taken from range or farm flocks are fattened by drylot feeding methods to make their carcasses more acceptable for marketing.

Sheepmen of the county prefer the Columbia breed. Columbias are big, hearty, dual-purpose animals that, through selective breeding, produce more pounds of wool and more pounds of lamb than other known breeds of the area.

Horses and Mules

Horses and mules have declined sharply since 1920, following the same pattern as for the state as a whole. In 1920, there were 21,314 head of work horses and mules on the farms and ranches of Yakima County. In addition, there were wild horses ranging the Rattlesnake and Horse Heaven Hills. By 1959, there were only 3,691 head and wild horses were gone. This decline is due to increased mechanization of farming in the form of tractors, trucks and other machinery. Horses and mules were once used extensively for farm work and transportation.

A few horses are kept today mostly for recreational riding in the woodland areas near the suburban districts and in mountain areas of the Cascades. A few farms raise horses for racing. Some of the large cattle and sheep ranches keep several head per farm. Mules are used mainly by the Park Service and Forest Service as pack animals and are rarely found on farms.

Poultry Farming

Poultry farming has been making steady progress since the decline between 1944 and 1949. The value of this industry increased 21 percent since 1949, going up from \$2,080,676 to \$2,523,911 in 1959. The production of chickens, eggs and broilers have all increased since 1954. There is a good local supply of feed crops, a dry climate and an increasing local consumer market. Favored by this, poultry farming has become popular on a number of farms. About 64 farms were specializing in either chickens or turkeys in 1959, but a larger number raised

poultry as a sideline. Over 700 farms sold poultry or poultry products during 1959, and about 154 farms raised turkeys. Among Washington counties, Yakima ranked sixth in numbers of chickens sold and was ninth in eggs sold for 1959.

The number of chickens on farms in Yakima in 1959 was 247,418, an increase of about 21 percent from the low of 205,143 in 1949. The trend in chicken numbers, therefore, during the past decade has been gradually upward, although still below earlier years. Poultrymen utilize both light-weight and heavy-weight breeds. The White Leghorn is favored for egg production, whereas, such breeds as Rhode Island Reds, New Hampshire and others are popular as meat production stock.

Table 40. Chickens, Eggs and Turkeys
Yakima County, 1939-1959

Year	Chickens (birds) 1/	Egg Production (dozens)	Turkeys Raised (birds)
1939	214,645	1,676,513	96,403
1944	280,395	2,261,764	166,461
1949	205,143	1,225,551 2/	171,042
1954	238,768	1,603,333 2/	148,073
1959	247,418	2,873,396 2/	163,565

1/ 4 months and over. 2/ Eggs sold.

Source: U. S. Census of Agriculture

Production of eggs during 1959 totaled 2,873,396 dozen, more than double the production 10 years earlier. Over 500 farms were selling eggs in 1959. Small farm flocks, once common, are rapidly becoming extinct. The current trend is toward large commercial flocks and specialized poultry farms referred to as "egg factories".

The commercial broiler industry is relatively new. In the past, poultry meat was a by-product of egg production. Now it is "big business". In 1959, the output of broilers and fryers exceeded 1,063,200 birds, more than five times that of 1954. Only a few farms (11) were specializing in this activity. Other chickens sold numbered 141,229 and were reported by 366 farms in 1959.

Yakima County is noted for its turkey production. In 1959, Yakima led all other counties in number of turkey fryers raised and accounted for 30 percent of the state's total. A total of 163,565 turkeys was raised on 154 farms during 1959, which represents an increase of 10 percent from 1954. Fewer turkeys are being raised, however, as compared to the peak years of the 1940's. Most of the turkeys raised are heavy breeds and the most popular for a number of years has been the Broadbreasted Bronze.

Bees

Bee keeping is an important specialty. Large acreages of fruit, alfalfa and flowering vegetables have encouraged bee keeping during recent years since bees help to insure good pollination, as well as produce honey. It is estimated that the Yakima Valley (Yakima and Benton Counties) has approximately 65 percent of the state's bees. In recent years, beehives have become more numerous and honey production has increased. Although not to be compared with beef cattle, hog raising and other farm operations, bee keeping does, however, occupy a significant spot in the county's agriculture, and for some farmers is an important source of income.